Ten years ago shocking and horrific acts of terrorism were carried out on US soil, taking over 3,000 innocent American lives.  Without a doubt, this action demanded retaliation and retribution.  However, much has been done in the name of protecting the American people from terrorism that has reduced our prosperity and liberty and even made us less safe.  This is ironic and sad, considering that the oft-repeated line concerning the reasoning behind the attacks is that they hate us for who we are - a free, prosperous people - and that we must not under any circumstances allow the terrorists to win.

Though it is hard for many to believe, honest studies show that the real motivation behind the September 11 attacks and the vast majority of other instances of suicide terrorism is not that our enemies are bothered by our way of life.  Neither is it our religion, or our wealth.  Rather, it is primarily occupation.  If you were to imagine for a moment how you would feel if another country forcibly occupied the United States, had military bases and armed soldiers present in our hometowns, you might begin to understand why foreign occupation upsets people so much.  Robert Pape has extensively researched this issue and goes in depth in his book "Cutting the Fuse:  The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It".  In fact, of 2,200 incidents of suicide attacks he has studied worldwide since 1980, 95% were in response to foreign occupation.

Pape notes that before our invasion of Iraq, only about 10% of suicide terrorism was aimed at Americans or American interests.  Since, then however, not only is suicide terrorism greatly on the rise, but 91% of it is now directed at us.

Yes, the attacks of 9/11 deserved a response.  But the manner in which we responded has allowed radicals in the Muslim world to advance a very threatening narrative about us and our motivation in occupying their lands.  Osama bin Laden referred to us as "crusaders" with a religious agenda to convert Muslims, westernize their culture and take control of their resources.  If we had targeted our response to only the thugs and criminals who attacked us, and refrained from invading countries that had nothing to do with it, this characterization would seem less plausible to the desperate and displaced.  Blaming Islam alone is grossly misleading.

Instead, we chose a course of action that led to the further loss of 8,000 American lives, left 40,000 wounded and has hundreds tof thousands seeking help at the Veterans Administration.  We are three to four trillion dollars poorer.  Our military is spread dangerously thin around the globe, at the expense of protection here at home.  Not only that, but we have allowed our freedoms to be greatly threatened and undermined from within.  The Patriot Act, warrantless

searches and wiretapping, abuse of habeus corpus, useless and humiliating searches at airports are just a few examples of how we've allowed the terrorists to "win" by making our country less free.

Suicide terrorism did not exist in Iraq before we got there.  Now it does.  There are no known instances of Iranians committing suicide terrorism.  If we invade and occupy Iran, expect that to change, too.

Sometimes it can be very uncomfortable to ask the right questions and face the truth.  When a slick politician comes along and gives a much more soothing, self-congratulating version of events, it is very tempting to simply believe what we would like to hear.  But listening to lies does not make us safer, even though it might make us feel better about ourselves.

The truth is that ending these misguided wars and occupations will make us safer, more prosperous and more free.